

# TOWN OF WINDHAM

## DEPARTMENT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT



Matthew Vertefeuille, Director  
Phone: 860-465-3070  
Fax: 860-465-3073  
mvertefeuille@windhamct.com

February 19, 2016

Planning & Development Committee

### **RE: Raised Bill No. 86 – An act concerning the fire safety code and one, two and three-family dwellings**

Madame Chair Senator Cathy Osten, Mister Chair Representative Phil Miller, and members of the Planning & Development Committee, I am before you today to speak of my support of Bill #86 An act concerning the fire safety code and one, two and three-family dwellings.

My name is Matthew Vertefeuille CZEO and Director of Code Enforcement of the Town of Windham and City of Willimantic. I am speaking to you in my professional capacity as Director of Code Enforcement and as a Landlord of a two-family dwelling and a three-family dwelling located in Willimantic.

In our town, “Absentee Landlords” or larger investors generally only purchase houses with four or more units because this is where there is profitability. The vast majority of two and three-family houses are either owner-occupied or were purchased as a retirement investment by local individuals or families. These Landlords are most responsive to issues and are generally involved in regular maintenance of their property. This bill would create financial relief of these responsible owners from having to upgrade to fire rated doors, fire separation, hardwired smoke detectors, and fire rated boiler rooms.

This bill will provide for a variance to help with the damage which is being done to historic homes. We as a Town are committed to restoring two and three-family houses back to single family homes. The bill would not give a blanket right of three family homes to not be inspected, but would offer a solution to the destruction of value. Property owners would need to prove residency and meet certain historic criteria set forth in CGA 22a-19a. This process would insure that only under certain conditions would the rules be varied.

Fire Marshals are generally stretched beyond capacity to inspect all that is mandated. Gas stations, nursing homes, liquor establishments, commercial businesses, schools, churches, hospitals, restaurants, and apartment complexes, are all required to be inspected. This bill would give a small relief to their workload. Every town would still have the right to a housing code to inspect for life and safety items within these buildings as we do in Windham.

I take the inspections very seriously in my capacity as Director of Code Enforcement. I have supervised or preformed hundreds of inspections in the past nine years. I will admit there have been several times I have cringed as I see the historic homes slowly dismantled and altered. These structures often change from homes full of character and charm to soulless fireproofed boxes which are silent to the outside Historic neighborhood around them. They become out of character, reduce property values and seldom do they return to their historic past.

Thank you for the committee’s time in hearing my testimony.

Respectfully yours,

Matthew Vertefeuille, CZEO  
Director, Code Enforcement

979 Main Street, Willimantic, Connecticut 06226-2200  
An Equal Opportunity Employer  
www.windhamct.com  
Se habla Español

